

Section II: Functional Annexes

Purpose

This annex provides the concepts, systems and organizations used to alert and warn the public of any highly probable and immediate danger or disaster. Hazard-specific annexes to this plan contain additional information for such specific emergencies.

Situations and Assumptions

1. Situation

- A. When the public is threatened by an immediate or potential emergency situation, it is essential that timely alerting and warning be accomplished to protect the public. The alerting process draws the public's attention to a threat or danger. The warning process provides accurate information and instructions to guide public response in taking appropriate protective actions. Pre-scripted Emergency Alert System (EAS) may be utilized to pass initial information and instructions to the media and the general public.
- B. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is the primary digitized warning system for South Central Montana including Stillwater County. The system is designed to provide a 24-hours warning point to the public for emergencies and disasters.
- C. Hazards vary in both predictability and speed of onset. The time available for warning varies from ample to none.
- D. Effective public response relies on public education measures taken prior to an emergency.

2. Assumptions

- A. A warning period will be available for most emergency situations although the amount of lead-time will vary from hazard to hazard. Proper use of adequate warning will save lives, reduce injuries, and protect property.
- B. A higher authority (State and /or Federal Government) may initiate warning whenever large-scale threat or emergency exists. Incident falling into this category include earthquake, terrorist attacks, and biohazards or severe weather conditions.
- C. Certain hazard-specific emergencies may require automatic emergency alerting, warning and notification of the general public and emergency response organizations. (see Section III: Hazard Annexes for further information.)
- D. Telephone communications may be disrupted or overloaded. Regional radio/television stations without emergency power may be off the air for lengthy periods of time.
- E. The broadcast media will be considered the primary system for providing warning and emergency information to the public, through news broadcasts and the EAS.

Concept of Operations

1. General

The concept of warning typically includes the activation of all or part of the emergency management organization and communicating with the general public and organizations such as schools, industry, employers, etc. to ensure that they are aware of a dangerous situation.

When designated authorities determine that it is necessary to warn the citizens of Stillwater County of a potential or imminent threat to public safety, a strategy appropriate to the situation will be implemented. This strategy will involve the coordinated use of many of the facilities, organizations, and techniques described in the following paragraphs, to ensure complete coverage of the effected area.

Sources of Emergency Information

Reports of situations that may endanger the public may come from a variety of sources, including private citizens, responding emergency services personnel, the National Warning System, the National Weather Service, major news wires services, government agencies, industries, and utilities.

Dissemination of Alert and Warning

- A. Public alerting and warning can be accomplished through one or a combination of means. These include:
- B. Selected indoor alerting/warning systems.
- C. Door-to-door alerting and warning, and route alerting and warning performed by law enforcement, fire fighter, or other designated emergency personnel utilizing vehicle, boat, or aircraft -mounted public address systems. (Written warnings should be used to warn the hearing-impaired on non-English speaking persons.)
- D. Telephone fan-out calls to schools, major employers, the hospital, nursing homes, day-care centers, etc.
- E. Pagers carried by key emergency response personnel, and people who usually work outside.
- F. Mass media, i.e., radio and television, through public announcements, and/or the Emergency Alert System (EAS).

2. Direction and Control

- See [Annex A](#) in Section II: Functional Annexes.
- The 24-hour, 911 Emergency Dispatch Center, is Stillwater County's primary contact point for the receipt and dissemination of emergency alert and warning.
- When time permits, e.g., in slowly developing disasters such as floods, the decision to disseminate the alert and warning to the general public will be made by the Disaster and Emergency Services Coordinator (DESC), or his/her designee, in coordination with the Chief Elected Officials (CEOs), or their designee(s).
- In some situations, an Incident Commander may initiate alerting and warning. Any such situation requiring warning of a substantial number of private citizens will be reported to the EOC in sufficient detail to permit them to evaluate the action that has been taken and to

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determine any additional actions to be initiated.

- Incident Commanders are authorized to carry out area, community, etc warning and evacuation on their own in fast-developing situations, e.g., hazardous materials incidents, in accordance with the Incident Command Procedures and this plan.
- The activation of the EAS normally will be authorized by the DESC or designated representative, or as described in hazard-specific appendices.
- The DESC or his deputy will activate the EAS by contacting the NWS (406-) to initiate the public broadcast message.

3. Operational Roles and Responsibilities

Stillwater County DES Coordinator:

- ❖ Establish an effective County emergency alert and warning system
- ❖ Conduct vigorous public awareness campaigns to educate the public of how alerts and warnings will be disseminated throughout the jurisdiction. Stress hazard awareness and personal preparedness in presentations with the media, schools and service clubs.
- ❖ Exercise warning and notification procedures at least annually.
- ❖ Involve the media and the local ARES groups in exercises and critiques.
- ❖ Test the EAS and emergency communications at least annually.
- ❖ Review and update this annex.
- ❖ Ensure the warning of key personnel had been accomplished by contacting the dispatch center.
- ❖ When notified of an emergency situation, reports to the EOC.
- ❖ Ensure radio equipment is working and appropriate agencies and groups are contacted.
- ❖ Inform the public through the EAS. Ensure that the EAS is not overly used to cause undue public concern.
- ❖ Ensure that special needs populations in the affected areas are being warned of the situation and taking recommended protective actions.
- ❖ Implements contingency plans to provide warnings if established warning systems fail to work.
- ❖ Appoints a PIO. If the primary PIO is not available, the new PIO should be experienced in the roles and responsibilities of a Public Information Officer.
- ❖ Hold a post-response evaluation to assess effectiveness of alert and warning process.
- ❖ Stress mitigation efforts, structural and non-structural, to department heads involved in the recovery efforts.

Stillwater County Public Information Officer:

- ❖ Reports to the EOC, upon activation.
- ❖ Contacts the media to inform them about the emergency.
- ❖ Supervises the preparation of emergency announcements for the EAS broadcasts.
- ❖ Coordinates all public announcements with the Incident Commander.
- ❖ Issues news media releases from the EOC, or, if activated, establishes and coordinates all actions with the Joint Information Center (JIC).
- ❖ Provides for briefings with the participation of the CEO and other involved in an emergency and the State PIO.

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- ❖ Verifies the authenticity of incoming information.
- ❖ Verifies that duplicate or contradictory releases are not being made.
- ❖ Takes action to maintain control of rumors.
- ❖ These or similar responsibilities will apply to any PIO working in the Stillwater County JIC.

4. Consideration and Implementation Responsibilities

- **Rumor Control**

Rumor control is vital during emergency operations. Sensitive or critical information must be authorized and verified before release. Unconfirmed rumors or information from unauthorized sources may be responded to in the following manner:

“We will not confirm until we have been able to check out the information through authorized sources. Once we have confirmed information, we will release it to all members of the press at the same time.”

Do not release information that might hinder emergency response, prejudice the outcome of an investigation, or pose a further threat to public safety. Examples include:

Personal conjecture about the course of the emergency or the conduct of response.

Speculation.

Demeaning information/statements.

Information that might compromise the effectiveness of response and recovery.

- **Public Emergency Alert Notification Systems**

Various systems exist for mass public notification through the telephone system. If phones are working, computerized systems can call thousands of residences at the same time to deliver pre-recorded warning messages. These systems are capable of making calls on a continuous basis until shut down. Two national-level systems that exist are:

- Reverse 911
- A child is Missing Alert System

Currently, activation of such systems must be made by designated law enforcement officials.

5. Administration and Logistics

- A. General**

- 1) The maintenance of the EOC and associated alert and warning equipment is the responsibility of the DESC. These responsibilities further include all procedures, personnel staffing and training related to EOC operations.
- 2) Administration associated with normal emergency services alert and warning dispatching is accomplished by SSD Director in the Dispatch Center.

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B. Emergency Alert System (EAS)

- 1) The Emergency Alert System had replaced the Emergency Broadcast System as the primary digitized warning system for several counties in south eastern Montana, including Stillwater County. The system is designed to provide a 24-hour warning point to the public for emergencies and disasters. The EAS is composed of commercial AM and FM radio and television broadcast stations authorized by the FCC to remain on the air during a declared emergency and to broadcast announcements as directed by local emergency management officials.
- 2) _KEMC_ Radio Station () is the primary station, with simulcast capability to the other participating local stations. ____ and the local dispatch center have generators, to enable broadcasting during power outages. This makes it essential for people to have battery-powered radios to receive these important messages during times of emergency.
- 3) The DESC or his deputy should activate the EAS by contacting the NWS (_)to initiate a public message.
- 4) Priorities for the EAS are:
 - a) Presidential Message
 - b) Local (County)
 - c) State Programming
 - d) National Weather Service and Regional
- 5) because of the large area served by EAS, its use must be restricted to situations in which all four of the following emergency criteria apply:
 - a) The situation is imminent (time is critical).
 - b) The situation is life threatening to the public.
 - c) The public must be provided with instructions.
 - d) Other warning methods would be ineffective.